

The President's Daily Brief

11 February 1970

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FOR THE PRESIDENT ONLY

THE PRESIDENT'S DAILY BRIEF

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PRINCIPAL DEVELOPMENTS



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Chinese road builders in Laos are putting the finishing touches on past projects. (Page 2)

The fedayeen are upset by the tighter controls placed on their activity by the Jordanian cabinet. (Page 3)

Former British Foreign Secretary Brown's views on the Middle East are noted on Page 4.



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Bangkok is withdrawing some privileges that had been extended to US business interests in Thailand. (Page 6)



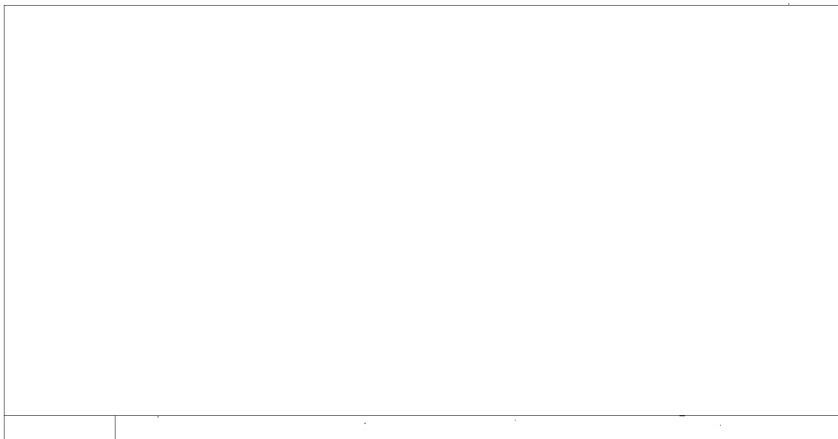
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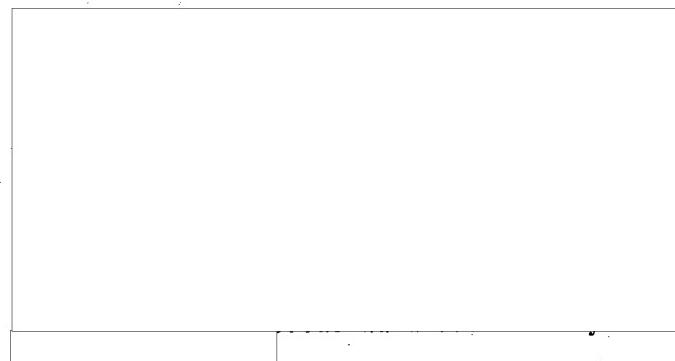
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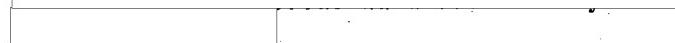


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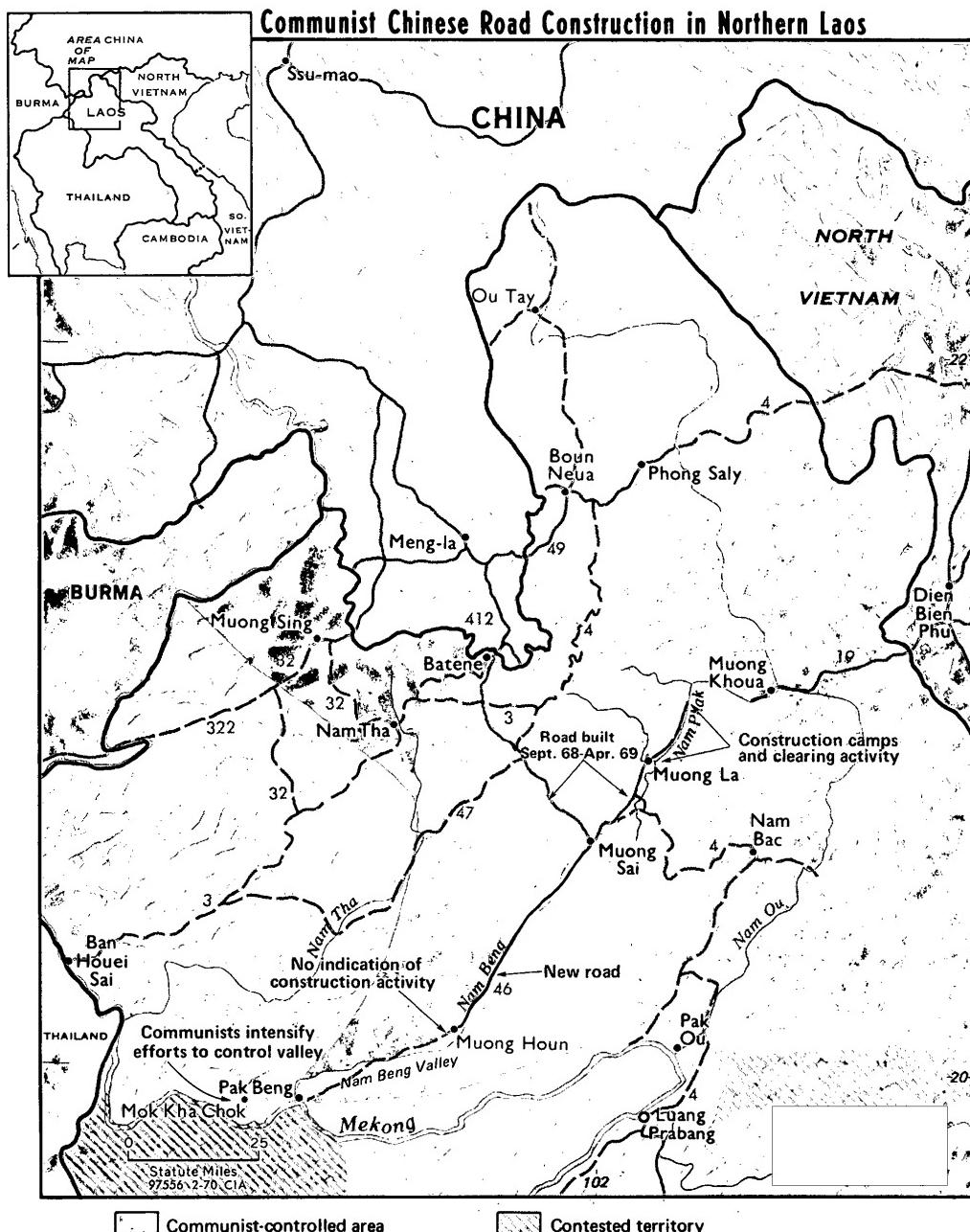
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LAOS - COMMUNIST CHINA

[redacted] Chinese road construction in the Nam Beng Valley has slowed considerably. Construction could be observed about one mile north of Muong Houn, but [redacted] no further indication of preparations to extend the road to Pak Beng.

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This seeming lack of activity south of Muong Houn suggests that the Chinese may have decided to concentrate on finishing projects now under way before launching new ventures. They may also be biding their time while the Pathet Lao complete a drive to clean out government forces from the southern end of the valley. On 8 February the government lost an outlying defensive position near its sole remaining outpost in the valley. It appears to be only a matter of time before this outpost becomes untenable.

The Chinese are more active on the leg northeast of Muong La, which apparently will connect Muong Sai with Route 19. Despite the rugged terrain, construction activity could be observed for some 14 miles from Muong La. [redacted] the framework for a large bridge was in place.

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JORDAN

The cabinet yesterday issued a new 11-point set of internal security restrictions that provides a framework for greater control over the Arab fedayeen. The new regulations prohibit unauthorized meetings and demonstrations, ban the private storing of explosives and the carrying of arms, and forbid the firing of guns in Amman. A two-week grace period is permitted for compliance.

King Husayn has done this before but has never made any consistent effort to follow through. The reason behind the timing of this latest order is not clear, although Husayn has said from time to time that he intends to reassert his authority over the fedayeen.

[redacted] It is doubtful that the King or the fedayeen are prepared for or intent on any full-scale showdown. In the past, Husayn has taken only small, careful steps and has attempted to play one guerrilla group against another.

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The various fedayeen organizations quickly responded to the cabinet's decision in a broadcast yesterday over Cairo's Voice of Fatah. The joint statement condemned the restrictions and accused the Jordanian Government of trying to "drag the country into civil war."

Currently there are rumors of increased dissension within Fatah, the major fedayeen organization, and Fatah leader Yasir Arafat is visiting Moscow. Husayn may therefore be attempting once again to exploit inter-fedayeen dissensions. In any event, the new orders seem certain to increase fedayeen-government tensions and a minor incident could lead to a serious confrontation.

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MIDDLE EAST

Former British Foreign Secretary George Brown argued these points to Ambassador Annenberg Monday about his recent trip to the Middle East:

--Policy on the Middle East can be realistic only if it is recognized that there is no single Arab or Israeli point of view. Israelis range from doves to hawks, holding every shade of opinion on such vital issues as retaining or giving up occupied territories. As for the Arabs, we must deal with not one nation but many, and with many differing factions within each.

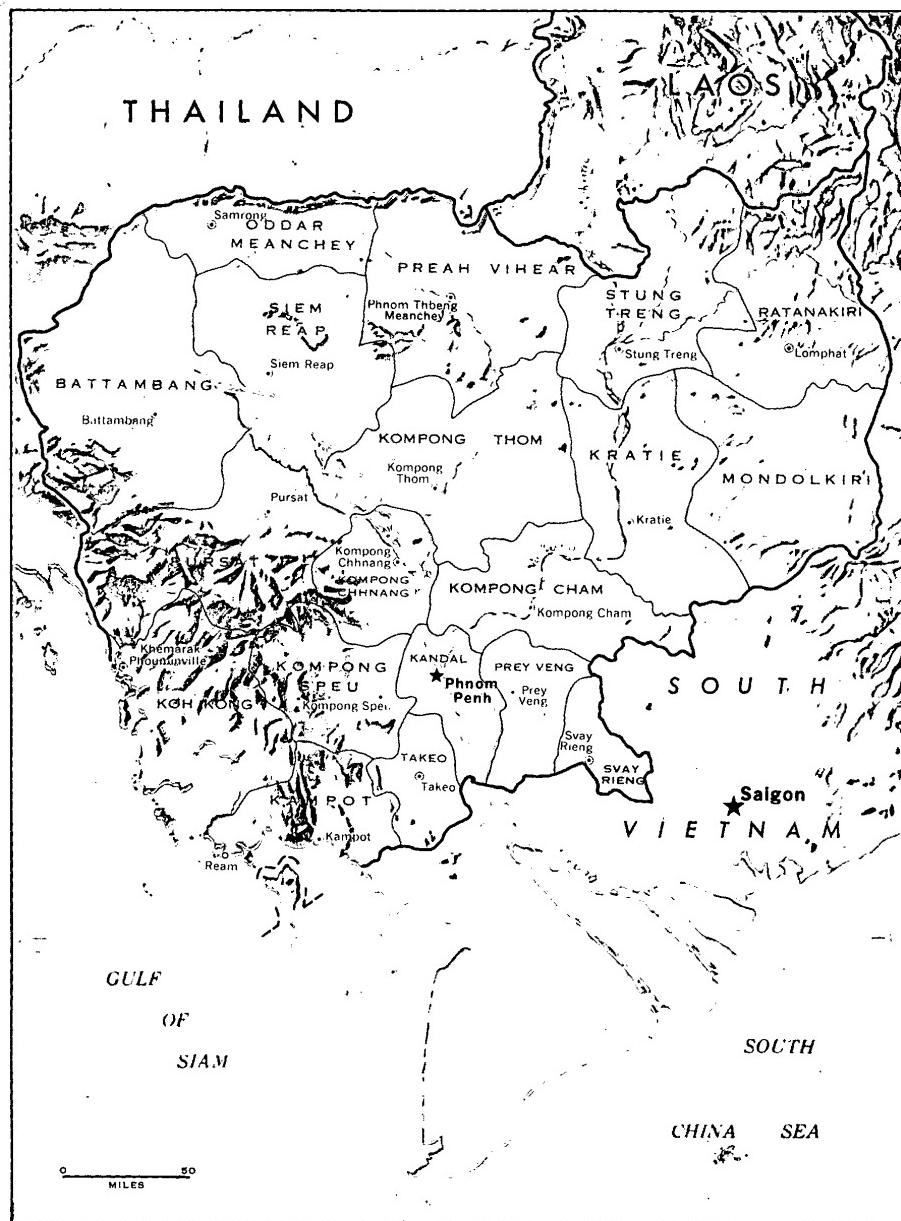
--The four-power effort is at an end. The four have left out the Palestinians, and yet it is abundantly clear that Palestinian opinion must be weighed in any final settlement. Rather than relaunching Jarring, the four would be better advised to introduce a new personality. [redacted]

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--Neither the Russians nor the French have any real desire to push for peace. The Soviets want only to retain or spread their own influence in the area, and the French are cynically doing the same thing.

Brown claims he told Arab leaders he thought that the American ideas for a settlement were remarkably good and urged them to negotiate on that basis. The Arab reaction was "most positive" right after Secretary Rogers' speech in December. Unfortunately, he said, the Arabs did nothing and since then there have been new developments which are restricting flexibility.

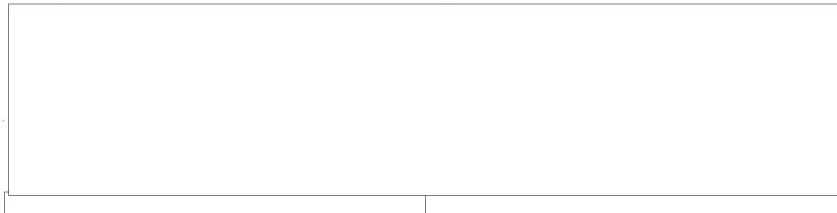
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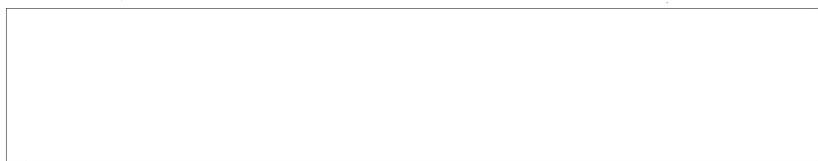
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THAILAND

US business interests in Thailand are being subjected to new restrictions. Bangkok has imposed visa requirements on US citizens for the first time in 45 years. The government has also announced its intention to restrict the services of US airlines on routes that are competitive with the Thai airline in an obvious effort to gain additional air rights to the US. Moreover, government leaders are talking about revising Thai investment and foreign employment laws, steps which would have considerable impact on the sizable US business community.

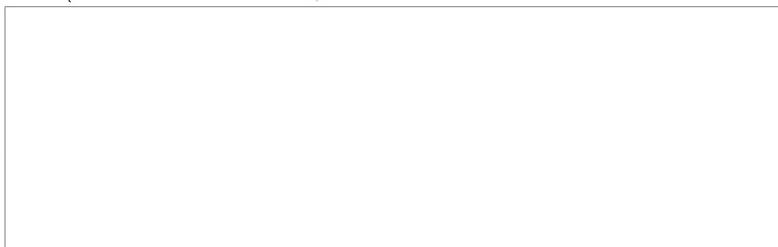
Bangkok's new-found interest in economic nationalism is a clear sign that the Thai leadership thinks some aspects of its close relationship with the US are overdue for modification. The Thai have long chafed under what they have viewed as inequities in their economic dealings with the US, but have put up with this problem in view of the Vietnam war and its more immediate economic rewards. We expect the Thai to drive a hard bargain in the current economic negotiations, but they cannot realistically ignore the substantial benefits now accruing from the US economic presence.

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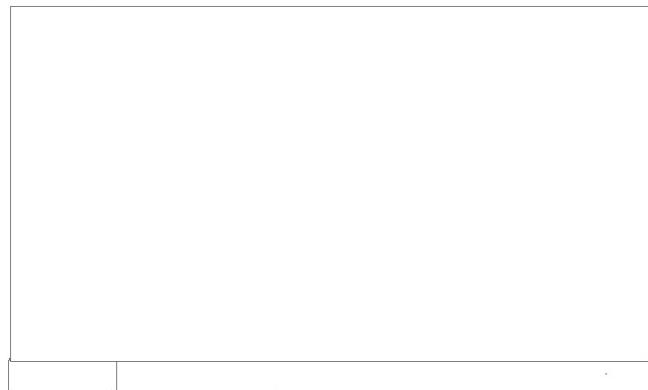
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